

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. In a franking machine, a control system comprising:

a system controller; and

a control interface for manually entering data and system directives, said control interface comprising:

a touch screen display; and

a display generator adapted to generate display screens having a plurality of touch button regions;

wherein said control system is adapted to generate main screens and work screens, said screens also comprising main areas for entering current data and directives, and history tabs adapted to activate displays for viewing the status and previous action associated with a categories of functions or information, and allowing a user to change information in the category associated with each specific history tab.

2. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said history tabs activate displays for only one previous history of the category associated therewith.

3. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said history tabs activate displays for categories of mandatory franking information.

4. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said history tabs activate displays for categories of rate-related information.

5. In a franking system, a control interface for manually entering data and system directives, said control interface comprising:

a touch screen display;  
a display generator adapted to generate display screens having a plurality of touch button regions; and  
a user display preference control coupled to said display generator, and adapted to control the grouping and orientation of said touch button regions.

6. The control interface in Claim 5, wherein said display preference control and said display generator are adapted to locate groups with more frequently touched touch button regions in a user-chosen hemisphere of displays.

7. The control interface in Claim 6, wherein said user-chosen hemisphere corresponds to the dominant side of the user's body.

8. The control system in Claim 1, further comprising a display preference control coupled to said display generator, and adapted to control the grouping and orientation of said touch button regions.

9. The control interface in Claim 8, wherein said display preference control and said display generator are adapted to locate groups with more frequently touched touch button regions in a user-chosen hemisphere of displays.

10. The control interface in Claim 9, wherein said user-chosen hemisphere corresponds to the dominant side of the user's body.

11. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said control system is further adapted to assign a particular advertisement field to be included in indicia printed on mail or mail labels, the particular advertisement field depending on the account to which mail being franked is charged.

12. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said control system is further adapted to assign a particular advertisement field to be included in indicia printed on mail or mail labels, the particular advertisement field depending on the user operating said franking machine.

13. The control system in Claim 1, wherein said control interface further comprises an overlay screen activation key adapted to activate a series of overlay screens linked to said main screens or said work screens, said overlay screens for entry of data or commands without closing the associated main or work screen.

14. The control system in Claim 13, wherein said overlay screens are associated with display settings.

15. The control system in Claim 13, wherein said overlay screens are associated with print engine management.

16. The control system in Claim 13, wherein said overlay screens are associated with print position settings.

17. The control system in Claim 13, wherein said overlay screens are associated with motor control settings.

18. The control system in Claim 13, wherein said overlay screens are associated with user context-sensitive information.

19. A method of controlling the operation of a franking machine, said method comprising the steps of:

providing system control via a system controller;

providing a control interface;

via said control interface, manually entering data and system directives;

generating via said control interface, a touch screen display; and

via a display generator, generating display screens having a plurality of touch button regions;

wherein said display screens comprise main screens and work screens, said screens also comprising main areas for entering current data and directives, and history tabs adapted to activate displays for viewing the status and previous action associated with a categories of functions or information, and allowing a user to change information in the category associated with each specific history tab.

20. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of, via said history tabs, activating displays for only one previous history of the category associated therewith.

21. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of, via said history tabs, activating displays for categories of mandatory franking information.

22. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of, via said history tabs, activating displays for categories of rate-related information.

23. In a franking system, a control interfacing method for manually entering data and system directives, said control interface method comprising the steps of:

providing a touch screen display;

via a display generator, generating display screens having a plurality of touch button regions; and

via a user display preference control coupled to said display generator, controlling the grouping and orientation of said touch button regions.

24. The method in Claim 23, further comprising the step of locating groups with more frequently touched touch button regions in a user-chosen hemisphere of displays.

25. The method in Claim 24, wherein said user-chosen hemisphere corresponds to the dominant side of the user's body.

26. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of, via a display preference control coupled to said display generator, controlling the grouping and orientation of said touch button regions.

27. The method in Claim 26, further comprising the step of locating groups with more frequently touched touch button regions in a user-chosen hemisphere of displays.

28. The method in Claim 27, wherein said user-chosen hemisphere corresponds to the dominant side of the user's body.

29. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of assigning a particular advertisement field to be included in indicia printed on mail or mail labels, the

particular advertisement field depending on the account to which mail being franked is charged.

30. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of assigning a particular advertisement field to be included in indicia printed on mail or mail labels, the particular advertisement field depending on the user operating said franking machine.

31. The method in Claim 19, further comprising the step of, via said control interface, activating via an overly screen activation screen key, a series of overlay screens linked to said main screens or said work screens, said overlay screens for entry of data or commands without closing the associated main or work screen.

32. The method in Claim 31, wherein said overlay screens are associated with display settings.

33. The method in Claim 31, wherein said overlay screens are associated with print engine management.

34. The method in Claim 31, wherein said overlay screens are associated with print position settings.

35. The method in Claim 31, wherein said overlay screens are associated with motor control settings.

36. The method in Claim 31, wherein said overlay screens are associated with user context-sensitive information.